

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for providing prepaid data service, the method comprising:

making a determination of whether a balance of the prepaid account meets a threshold;

if the determination is that the balance of the prepaid account does not meet the threshold, then passing traffic to a requested destination;

if the determination is that the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold, then redirecting the traffic to a self-service portal; and

adding value to the balance of the prepaid account at the self-service portal.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein making the determination of whether the balance of the prepaid account meets a threshold comprises comparing the balance of the prepaid account to the threshold.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting a level of prepaid data access to a data network.
4. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending an alert to the subscriber terminal, the alert providing a notification of prepaid data access available to the subscriber terminal.
5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

establishing a communication session with a subscriber terminal; and
directing the traffic from the subscriber terminal to the self-service portal in
response to establishing the communication session.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
establishing a communication session with a subscriber terminal over an air
interface,
whereby the traffic is received from the subscriber terminal.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein a counter represents the balance of the
prepaid account, the method further comprising adjusting the counter as the traffic passes
to the requested destination.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
subscribing to a billing server to determine the balance of the prepaid account;
and
receiving an indication of the balance of the prepaid account from the billing
server.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the indication is whether the balance of
the prepaid account meets the threshold.

10. The method of claim 8, further comprising periodically polling the billing server for the indication of the balance of the prepaid account.

11. A method of prepaid data service, the method comprising:
establishing a communication session with a subscriber terminal;
making a determination of whether the balance of the prepaid account meets a threshold;

if the determination is that the balance of the prepaid account does not meet the threshold, then passing traffic from the subscriber terminal to a requested destination;

if the determination is that the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold, then redirecting the traffic from the subscriber terminal to a self-service portal; and

providing an account number to the self service portal to add value to the balance of the prepaid account.

12. A method for providing prepaid data service, the method comprising:
making a first determination of whether a balance of a prepaid account meets a first threshold;

if the first determination is that the balance of the prepaid account does not meet the first threshold, then passing traffic to a requested destination;

making a second determination of whether the balance of a prepaid account meets a second threshold, the second determination being made in response to (i) the subscriber terminal being dropped from an access gateway; and (ii) the subscriber terminal reestablishing a communication session with the access gateway; and

if the second determination is that the balance of the prepaid account meets the second threshold, then redirecting the traffic to a self-service portal.

13. A system for prepaid data service comprising:

a subscriber terminal;

a data gateway;

a web server;

wherein the data gateway comprises a processor, a memory, and computer instructions stored in the memory and executable by the processor for:

passing traffic from the subscriber terminal to a requested destination if a balance of the prepaid account does not meet a threshold; and

redirecting the traffic to the web server if the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold; and

wherein the web server comprises a processor, a memory, and computer instructions stored in the memory and executable by the processor for:

adding value to the balance of the prepaid account in response to the balance of the prepaid account meeting the threshold.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein a determination of whether the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold comprises comparing the prepaid account to the threshold.

15. The system of claim 13, further comprising a policy decision point, the policy decision point having comprises a processor, a memory, and computer instructions stored in the memory and executable by the processor for comparing the balance of the prepaid account to the threshold to determine whether the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein a self-service portal resides on the web server.

17. The system of claim 13, wherein the web server further comprises computer instructions for selecting a level of prepaid data service.

18. The system of claim 13, wherein the data gateway further computer instructions stored in the memory and executable by the processor for directing the traffic from the subscriber terminal to the web server in response to a communication session being established with the subscriber terminal.

19. The system of claim 13, wherein the data gateway comprises an entity selected from the group consisting of a PDSN, an MSC, an IWF, a WAP server, and a switch.

20. The system of claim 15, wherein the policy decision point comprises an entity selected from the group consisting of a service agent, a service control point, and a network capabilities gateway.

21. The system of claim 13, wherein the data gateway further comprises computer instructions stored in memory and executable by the processor for sending an alert to the subscriber terminal, the alert providing a notification of prepaid access available to the subscriber terminal.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein the alert is selected from the group consisting of a text message and a voice message.

23. The system of claim 13, wherein (i) the subscriber terminal transmits the traffic over an air interface to an access entity and (ii) the access gateway is coupled to the data gateway by a communication network.

24. The system of claim 13, wherein the subscriber terminal is a wireless terminal.

25. The system of claim 13, wherein the requested destination is on a data network.

26. The system of claim 13, further comprising:

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a billing server; and

the data gateway further comprising computer instructions stored in the memory and executable by the processor for:

subscribing to the billing server to determine the balance of the prepaid account; and

receiving an indication of the balance of the prepaid account from the billing server.

27. The system of claim 26 wherein the indication is whether the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold.

28. The system of claim 26 wherein the data gateway further comprises computer instructions for periodically polling the subscriber terminal for the indication of the balance of the prepaid account.

29. The system of claim 13 wherein a counter representing the balance of the prepaid account is adjusted as traffic passes to the requested destination.

30. A system for prepaid data service comprising:

means for making a determination of whether the balance of the prepaid account meets a threshold;

means for passing traffic to a requested destination if the determination is that the balance of the prepaid account does not meet the threshold; and

means for redirecting the traffic to a self-service portal if the determination is that the balance of the prepaid account meets the threshold.

31. A system for prepaid data service comprising:

a subscriber terminal;

a data gateway;

wherein the data gateway comprises a processor, memory, and computer instructions stored in the memory and executable by the processor for:

passing traffic to a requested destination if a balance of a prepaid account does not meet a first threshold; and

in response to (i) the subscriber terminal being dropped from an access gateway; and (ii) the subscriber terminal reestablishing a communication session with the subscriber terminal, redirecting the traffic to a self-service portal if the balance of the prepaid account meets the second threshold.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein the data gateway is a WAP server.

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